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ABSTRACT

Today, the United States incarcerates more people per capita and imposes longer sentences than any other country in the world. In 1966, there were less than 1,000 people in Arizona's only prison. Now, the state operates eight prison complexes housing 15,000 inmates annually. Given that the majority of imprisoned people are going to be released, education and training programs for inmates are essential. Arizona has been a leader in the provision of college-level education for inmates, linking each of the state's correctional institutions with a nearby community college. Together, Arizona's community colleges currently enroll approximately 3,000 inmates, or 20% of the total prison population, in programs adapted to the needs of each unique institutional environment. Pima Community College (PCC) has been serving Arizona State Prison Complex-Tucson since 1977. The college now offers three full-time high technology vocational/technical programs in desktop publishing/graphics, computer applications, and electronics/microcomputer technology, as well as a wide array of academic transfer courses, enrolling between 450 and 500 student-inmates per semester. Program faculty undergo a 40-hour orientation provided by the prison. The program also employs a full-time advisement specialist who insures that students understand the requirements for successful completion of their degrees or certificates. In addition, students nearing their prison release date can take special courses which teach skills in locating and keeping a job. Although no follow-up or longitudinal data are available on Arizona's programs, research has shown that education and training in prison is highly correlated to success outside, and thus to a reduction in recidivism. (PAA)

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DIVERSITY IN SERVING PRISON POPULATIONS

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Remarks given at the
Convention of the
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
in Kansas City

April 13, 1991

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REMARKS GIVEN AT THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY
& JUNIOR COLLEGES CONVENTION
IN KANSAS CITY

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April 13, 1991

I would like to talk a bit about what is happening with regard to the correctional population in the United States. Then say a few words about my home state - Arizona.
And, finally, to review what we at Pima Community College are doing within our prison program in Tucson.

As we sit here - at this moment in time - the number of people in correctional institutions and detention facilities in the United States exceeds one million. The human resources, talents, and abilities represented by that number are quite fantastic. We, in the United States, incarcerate more people (per capita) than any country in the world - even more than the Soviet Union (now that they have opened their Gulogs), and more than South Africa (now that they have begun opening the Aparteid prisons.)

We also incarcerate people under the longest sentences in the world. The problem of locking up so many people, is that we may be forced into releasing some long before their sentences are completed.

Yet - do any of us feel safer???? Is our crime rate going down???? The answers are obvious. The only thing going down is the taxpayers confidence in their legislatures.
Yes, you say.... but certainly some things are increasing.
You are correct--- Some things are in fact going up....
The things going up are frustration, and taxes to pay for the construction and operation of more and more prisons. This upward spiral is escalating with no end in sight.
(At the present time in Arizona, it costs $50,000 per bed space, to build a Medium Security Prison.)

In Arizona, for example, in 1966 there were less than one thousand persons in prison, and our Department of Corrections consisted of one institution. Today, the Arizona Department of Corrections has grown to eight prison complexes and several release centers which now house some 15,000 inmates. (This is a 15 fold increase in 25 years.) The Arizona Department of Corrections' Maintenance and Operation budget for the upcoming fiscal year, is in excess of 260 million dollars. - That's Right - over a quarter of a billion a year and growing rapidly. (That is $17,000 per inmate - per year.)

Furthermore, the Arizona Department of Corrections growth projections, call for a prison population in excess of 25,000 by the end of this decade ...and, an M & O budget of approximately half a billion dollars a year. I am not convinced that Arizona is different or unique in terms of inmate growth trend lines. In fact, I heard recently that the State of California currently has 100,000 people in its prisons. - And a huge budget deficit. Couple with this the uncontrovertible fact, which must be acknowledged, that almost every man and woman in prison today is going to be released - some of them perhaps more quickly than you or I would wish - but, nonetheless, released they shall be.

So, there is a Social Policy issue which needs to be addressed. Do we want these men and women to be released from prison in essentially the same condition as when they entered? - or - might there be some merit to providing education and training, to building employability, to enhancing self-esteem?

Once that decision is made, who better to provide the educational services than the community colleges? It seems to me that the notion of correctional education fits nicely with the philosophy of community and junior colleges.

Arizona, for all its recent negative press relative to its public image and political figures, has really been a leader in the provision of college level education to the adult prisoners incarcerated in its state prison system. The first Arizona Community College course offered in a prison, was in 1967, since that time the number of prisons and prisoners - as well as the community colleges' involvement - has grown dramatically.

Each of Arizona's eight correctional institutions has a working relationship with the community college in the college district within which the prison is located. This working relationship is delineated in an annual Intergovernmental Agreement between the Community College and the Arizona Department of Corrections. (Each of the individual institutions negotiate the contract with the colleges, and the Department of Corrections.)

Each of the Agreements is different, in that they reflect the unique custody and secuity concerns of the individual correctional institutions. For example, in some of the more secure institutions with closer custody, the community college may rely more heavily on "Distance Learning" utilizing closed circuit television or video cassettes. This allows the colleges to teach in every institution and to every custody level in the state. Similarly, the prison voc/tech programs provided by the community colleges differ from institution to institution. Some of them are heavily weighted toward the typical building trades (carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring, masonry, etc.), while others, like ours at Tucson, are much more contemporary and high tech. The differences may be found in the age of the institutions. The older prisons seem to have the more traditional programs, while the newer ones have a more technical emphasis.

At the present time in Arizona, the community colleges have enrolled in their courses, approximately 3,000 of Arizona's prison inmates. (This represents about 20% of the total Department of Corrections prison population.) These men and women are taking a very wide variety of vocational, technical, and academic - university transer courses. This year in Arizona, there will be approximately one to two hundred Associates degrees awarded to prison inmates, and, a very large number of vocational certificates as well.

As is true in many states which operate a number of correctional institutions, the Arizona Corrections Department uses inter-institutional transfers to address their organizational needs, - among which is the need to keep different custody level beds filled. For example, if the Department of Corrections was to discover that they had empty beds in one of their Minimum Security Institutions, they would look for inmates classified at that custody level and re-locate them to the institution with the available beds.

On many occasions, these inmates happened to be community college students in the middle of a semester. Obviously, they would have to drop all of their courses in order to be transferred. However, a year and a half ago the seven Arizona Community Colleges with prison programs, got together and developed a common calendar. In between the school semesters, we all provided "movement windows" of a week or several weeks duration, during which the Department of Corrections could move any of our students from institution to institution.

Result: Our completion rate which for the previous four years had been running 60-66%, shot up to 84% last year, and 87% last semester, our spring semester numbers are not yet in.

Now, I'd like to talk about the Pima Community College program at the Arizona State Prison Complex-Tucson.

In 1977, the Director of the Arizona Department of Corrections convinced the legislature that the revolving door phenomenon of our prisons could be blunted if they, (the legislators), would only be willing to attack the reasons why many people go to, - and upon release, end up going back to, - prison.

It was his contention - supported by some research - that the two postive correlates to incarceration were: (1) age (crime tends to be a younger man's game), and (2) lack of education and training. Inasmuch as there was nothing that could be done with regard to chronology, they decided to try to do something about education and training. So, they built an institution in Tucson which originally housed some 650 "Special" inmates: they were all under 25 years of age, sentenced to prison for the first time, serving less than five years, and had no violent or sexual crimes. The year after the prison opened, Pima Community College courses were introduced into the institution. The college has remained involved, in varying degrees, ever since.

The prison now is know as the Arizona State Prison Complex-Tucson. It consists of four separately administered units which contain a total of 2400 inmates. All of the original criteria which made the first group of inmates "Special", have been abandoned due to severe overcrowding within the prison system. The complex has one minimum and three medium security prisons. The average length of stay at that institution is, I would guess, less than 15 months..

There is an old theory that suggests that inmate populations may be conveniently categorized into three groups: Insiders (-persons who are essentially comfortable in the prison - the chronic repeaters - which comprise about 15-20% of the general population), Outsiders (-persons who see prison as an interruption of their lives - who tend to do their time quickly and quietly and get out - they make up about 60% of the population), and Changers (-those who see prison as an opportunity to make positive changes in their lives - and comprise 20-25% of the prison population. To the extent that this is true, we probably serve the Changers while trying to recruit and enlist the others.

At the present time, Pima Community College offers three full-time voc/tech programs and a wide array of university transfer courses - what we differentiate as "Academic courses", to the inmates of the Tucson Complex. We offer approximately one hundred and forty sections per year. We enroll between four hundred and fifty, and five hundred students every semester. Our average class size is approximately 20 students. We teach on a Monday thru Friday schedule of three time blocks per day:

8:00 - 10:45 A.M.
1:00 - 3:45 P.M.
6:00 - 8:45 P.M.

This allows the institution opportunities to conduct counts, provide meals, etc. Occasionally, we do a course over the institutions closed circuit television system. We submit our proposed classroom schedules to the institution staff for approval. Obviously, there are some courses which cannot be offered inside a prison - for example Chemistry. Also, the institution does record checks on all of our employees, and prospective employees. And, the prison reserves the right to refuse admission to someone who might have a criminal record. Our full-time faculty undergo a forty hour orientation provided by the prison. Our Associate Faculty have four hours or pre-service orientation.

Let me say a word about our faculty recruitment....
Obviously, there are a group of people who will not - under any conditions - teach inside a correctional institution. Fear of the institution, (the clanging of the iron gates and the sound of the electric doors), fear or loathing of the inmates, inconvenience of going thru the security measures, - the metal detectors, searches, etc., - hostility of some prison staff, the list of reasons goes on. This reality diminishes the available instructor pool.

However, I have found that there are quite a few people who prefer to teach in the prison setting. Also, we are fortunate to be located in Tucson which is a city of some size with a major university. And, by the way, in all my years in the business of correctional education, we have never had an incident involving a college employee being in any jeopardy. Some of those faculty who prefer the prison setting remark how they are struck with the motivation the students bring to the classroom.

Many people think that inmates must be very bored because they just sit around all day. While this may be true of some.... many/most of our students work at jobs during the day and attend classes in the evening. Our students take classes for a wide variety of reasons... some do so out of boredom as was just suggested,... others believe that educational activity will bode well for them in terms of making parole.... still others who may live in different parts of the prison may take a course in order to be able to get together with a friend or associate... and then there are those who take select courses because of a desire for personal growth and development, and enrichment.... finally the largest number are inmates, who think that their employment or professional opportunities will be enhanced by furthering their education while incarcerated.

In our Pima College program at the Tucson Prison Complex, we recognized the need to provide contemporarily relevant voc/tech programs. Following that tack, we feel we have some of the best equipped programs anywhere---Our Graphics program focuses on desktop publishing using computers, laser printers, etc. Obviously, we also teach stripping, layout, plate making, typesetting, computer graphics, ink on paper printing (we have four printing presses), finishing and bindery, and so on.

Our Computer Applications program is currently using a Novell Arcnet Local Area network, with 22 IBM compatible student workstations. The file server is a 25 megahertz, 80386 with a 150 megabyte hard disc.

In the Electronics/Microcomputer Technology program. we also use a network with an 80386 server and fourteen IBM Clone workstations. Additionally, we use training and troubleshooting computers which we ourselves built in the electronics shop.

We have equipped and developed these programs after researching the labor market trends, and predictions for the future, for jobs in our state and in our region. --- We do not train these inmates for dead end jobs or non-existent jobs.

We are planning to start a new voc/tech program at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Our new program will be Wastewater Technology.

Our program has a full-time Advisement Specialist who sees to it that our students are "on track" to meeting all of the requirements with regard to the successful completion of their degrees or certificates. We support our technical education with a series of courses in communications, math, human relations, etc. We try to encourage critical thinking skills. (We are attempting to secure a small grant to conduct a two year critical thinking demonstration project.) And, as our students near their release date, we teach employability skills by way of courses entitled "How to Get a Job", and another called "How to Keep a Job." Finally, our instructors use their industry colleague connections, and their professional "networks' to try to line up job opportunities for their graduates who are released.

Student Selection-----
Our voc/tech programs require a tenth grade reading and math competency level for admission into the program. If an applicant for admission does not meet this standard, he is referred to the prison education staff for remediation. (The prison itself operates an Adult Basic Education program, as well as a G.E.D. preparation program.)

Our college "Academic" program requires the applicant possess a high school diploma or a G.E.D. (The education program run by the prison feeds into ours. For example, when an inmate who had entered the institution without a high school diploma, earns his G.E.D., he is then eligible for our university transfer or degree program.)

Over and above this, the institution has its own cirteria or standards which must be met before an inmate can take collge classes. These standards relate to security matters and institutional management concerns.

Funding------ How are we funded?
As I mentioned earlier, Pima and the other community colleges in Arizona who have programs in the prisons, have an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Department of Corrections. Additionally, we receive state aid on the basis of our full-time student equivalents. Periodically, we seek special grant monies. And finally, a year ago we decided to experiment with Pell Grants. That experiment is ongoing. We do enjoy a good relationship with the prison personnel. However, that didn't happen quickly nor easily. We try to make ourselves important to the institution. We cooperate with them in any way we can and provide a variety of services.

Our Graphics Technology program provides a wide range of printing and graphics services. We do many printing jobs for the Tucson Prison.

Our Electronics/Microcomputer Technology program builds and maintains computers and other hardware for the prison. Also, we have installed and maintain local area computer networks inside the institution.

Our Computer Technology program has written a variety of programs for such things as inventory control of the Warehouse and Inmate Stores.

Also, Pima College has provided courses in the institution for staff---Introduction to Computers and Word Processing for the secretaries, communication skills, report writing, and things like that.... we would like to offer courses in stress management, conflict resolution, crisis intervention - and the other kinds of things relevant to the jobs that the staff hold. Our students evaluate our faculty two times each semester. One is an evaluation required by the collge, which lends itself to quantification and comparison with other instructors, who are teaching the same course in the same semester. In addition, we utilize our own internal instrument which tries to look at the teaching styles and methodologies of our instructors at the prison. Also, we visit - announced or unannounced - each classroom while the course is being taught. If nothing else, this gives the students the knowledge that the administration cares about their education. (Obviously, our "captive" audience allows us to get daily feedback from our students. We get out every single day to the prison yards and are always available to hear complaints or compliments. This visibility adds to our credibility.)

Finally, there is an administrative evaluation which looks at such things as starting class on time, taking class breaks on schedule, keeping good attendance records, ending on time, maintaining the proper records, etc. (Obviously, the prison runs on a very tight schedule. It is vital that the institution's schedules be rigidly maintained. They have a need to know who is where and when. Therefore, our record keeping is very important.)

I could acquaint you with our anecdotal success stories - we have many. But, I'm certain you would rather hear about some controlled research and evaluation, a longitudinal study.
Unfortunately, in Arizona, none exist. The reason for this is a Department Policy which precludes contact with an ex-offender, by anyone other than the Department of Corrections, for a period of five years after his/her release or discharge. However, there are any number of studies that show that education and training gained while in prison, are highly correlated with success in the free world - or, in layman's terms - a reduction in recidivism.

Illinois Study - 1988

Some Findings:

(1) Vocational and Vocational/Academic groups had the highest rates of employment and a slightly lower unemployment rate.

(2) The control group (this is the group which had no education or training while in prison) had the highest criminal activity rate.

(3) "An inmate who completes a Vocational program and has at least a GED/High School level of education, has a greater chance of securing employment and avoiding criminal activity."

In summary and conclusion, I'd like to say that the numbers of persons incarcerated in the United States will certainly not decrease in the short term - even if, or though, the crime rate decreases.

For every man or woman we can keep out of prison, we can save tens of thousands of dollars per year. - This is clearly in our self-interest as educators and as taxpayers.

I would encourage every one of you who does not have a correctional education program at your college, to look into it. And, if I can help you in any way - just let me know.

Thank you.

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